

**Speech to the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner of the American Society  
of Women Accountants – Phoenix Chapter**

**March 17, 2005**

Good evening, it's a pleasure to be here. I am honored to have been invited to speak at your 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner, and to speak on a topic of which I am most proud of: A Celebration of Women's Accomplishments.

As you may know, I am one of five state-wide elected Commissioners with the Arizona Corporation Commission. What you may not know, though, is what the Corporation Commission does. I must confess that when asked to talk about the Commission, I often refer to it as "The Corporation Commission: The Most Powerful Branch of Government that No One Knows About."– So you are not alone if you don't know much about my job.

In a nutshell, the Commission has constitutional authority to regulate public utilities, corporate filings, securities, and railroad and pipeline safety.

Originally, the Commission began its work with three members. In 2000, however, Arizona voters decided to increase the number to 5. In its 93-year history, the Commission has had five female members. I am the fifth.

When I was appointed to the Commission in 2003, I had some idea of the issues I would be working on. What I did not have a full appreciation of at that time, however, was the power and the scope and the rich history of the Corporation Commission.

While it may in fact be the least understood branch of government, it did not begin that way. The Commission was conceived in 1910 at the state's Constitutional convention, as the earnest proposal of men who were deeply devoted to the idea that consumers and ratepayers deserve an advocate at the highest levels of state government. The framers felt so strongly about this principle that they established the Commission as a separate, popularly-elected branch of state government. Thus, upon statehood, Arizona's Constitution gave birth to the Commission—resulting in the current quasi-judicial body, commonly considered our fourth branch of government.

Most observers see the belief in a body advocating consumer rights as a sign of the desire of our founding fathers to create a powerful watchdog branch of government – one that would safeguard the interests of ratepayers and consumers against the power of monopolies. In the days surrounding statehood, the monopolies to be regulated were railroads and companies like Standard Oil. Today, the monopolies we regulate are the state’s electric, water, telecommunications and natural gas utilities.

Although you may not hear about the Commission on a daily basis, our impact across Arizona is omnipresent. For example, the top five utilities regulated by the Commission charge Arizona consumers \$6 billion in rates every year – almost the same amount as is contained in the state budget. Those rates are charged not only to individuals – you and me – but to every business, large and small, in Arizona. In addition to being impacted by the rates charged by our state’s utilities, businesses and individuals depend for their own continued prosperity on utilities that provide safe and reliable service.

As you might have guessed, our most important mission is ratemaking, which falls under the general purview of Utilities. We are responsible for setting rates for “public service companies” – or monopoly utilities, which are all corporations other than municipal, engaged in furnishing energy, water, or communications.

A current example of our ratemaking authority – which will undoubtedly have an effect on most of you here tonight – is the APS Rate Case. In this case, APS has proposed a 10% increase in rates, while our staff recommends a 9% decrease. [More?]

Another aspect of our authority that has more professional relevance to this group is our ministerial duty for corporate filings. As you all are probably very familiar with, in most states, all of the business filings are handled by one agency. In Arizona, we have two different repositories, depending on the type of filing required.

The Commission handles all corporation and LLC filings while the Secretary of State is responsible for partnerships and tradenames. This can be confusing to many small businesses, but our staff as well as the Secretary of State’s staff, does an admirable job of directing people to

the right location. Indeed, the Corporation Commission's moniker can be misleading: our role is ministerial in nature, which means that we are mainly a repository for the documents; we do not exist to enforce corporate laws.

Well, I think that is enough about my day job, what I really came here to talk about is the celebration of women's accomplishments – particularly in government.

I'll start with a little bit more about myself. I was born and raised in beautiful Prescott. After graduating from Prescott High School and winning the Flinn scholarship, I attended Arizona State University. While at ASU I served as editor in chief of the *State Press*, which I am proud to say is one of the nation's largest college newspapers! I also completed an internship with the Johannesburg Star in Johannesburg, South Africa. I won the Truman Scholarship, which is the nation's top scholarship for public service, and I was a national finalist for the Rhodes scholarship. Oh, then I finally graduated – valedictorian, with a degree in political science!

While an undergraduate, my love for politics was fostered when I interned in Washington D.C. for Congressman Bob Stump. After college, I continued my interest in politics while working as a general assignment reporter for the *Phoenix Gazette*, and later as a political reporter for the *Arizona Republic*, covering the state Legislature.

I then left my post at the *Republic* to attend graduate school at Columbia University in New York, where I earned a Master of Public Administration. I did my Masters thesis on the effects of electric deregulation on efforts to aggregate power, never thinking for a minute that that would come in handy. Who would have thunk it?

Following graduate school, I returned to the *Arizona Republic*, where I was assigned to cover the 2000 presidential campaigns of Sen. John McCain, former Vice President Dan Quayle, publisher Steve Forbes and then-Governor George W. Bush.

After the presidential campaign, I decided that I should get a law degree. So, I attended ASU's College of Law and graduated magna cum laude.

How I first became a Commissioner is also very interesting. In short, I was appointed to former-Commissioner Jim Irvine's seat over a year and a half ago by Governor Napolitano. I then ran for and was elected to my seat in November of last year.

While I don't want to go into all of the details, the whole story actually has its genesis in my love for politics. I first got to know Gov. Napolitano, as some of you may know, on a flight to Washington, D.C., during the summer between my first and second years in Law School. I was minding my own business in coach, when the then Attorney General passed by me on her way to her seat. I was a little tired of what I was reading, so I decided to reach up and tap the Attorney General's elbow to say hello. Two hours later she had persuaded me to join her campaign as her press secretary. And three years later she had persuaded me to be her appointee to the Corporation Commission when the scandal-plagued Jim Irvin resigned.

I am not sure what the lesson is in all of that, except that you shouldn't be afraid to take chances, and the next time you fly, don't be shy about chatting up politicians!

Like I mentioned earlier, I am only the fifth woman to serve on the Corporation Commission – but I am happy to say that I follow the footsteps of a long line of prominent women-politicians in Arizona. A brief history of women-politicians in Arizona will demonstrate my point.

I think we all can point to Ms. Sharlot Hall as the first and most famous woman to emerge in Arizona politics. Hall was the first woman to hold a public office in Arizona – as Territorial Historian – a post she took even before statehood. Later, in 1924, she was nominated to be the Republican presidential elector, requiring a trip to Washington to deliver the Electoral College vote. Hall's political contributions in Arizona truly opened the door for other women, including myself, to get involved in the political process.

The torch first lit by Sharlot Hall has continued to burn bright because of many other courageous Arizona women, like Ms. Isabella Greenway King – who, in 1933, became Arizona's first Congresswoman. And how could we not mention Sandra Day O'Connor – who, in 1981, after a very prestigious political and legal career in Arizona, became our *nation's* first woman Supreme Court Justice!

This rich tradition rose to prominence again in 1998, when Arizona made history by electing all women to the top five executive political positions of the state, including Governor Jane Hull, Secretary of State Betsey Bayless, Treasurer Carol Springer, Superintendent of Public Instruction Lisa Keegan, and, of course, then-Attorney General and current Governor Janet Napolitano. Who, by the way, in 2002 became the first woman to succeed another woman as Governor in the country!

Even our state Legislature follows suit, where one third of the members are women. In fact, Arizona is among the top ten states in the country with the most women in their legislature.

I hope what I have demonstrated to you tonight, as a small piece to a much larger picture, is the critical role women play in our state government. Our leadership now penetrates into every facet of our society, from government to education to business – and we are here to stay! I am confident that, because of the continued leadership by Arizona's women and organizations like yours, there is no challenge that we cannot overcome. And I look forward to working with all of you to keep our torch burning bright! Thank you.